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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003079

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#) [KDP](#)

SUBJECT: TOP KURDISH LEADER PLEDGES FLEXIBILITY ON KIRKUK  
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

REF: KIRKUK 142

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission David M. Satterfield for reasons

1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) On July 21 Kurdish Regional President and KDP leader Masood Barzani told DCM that he wanted to bring the contentious question of appointments to the Kirkuk provincial government to a close. He said the KDP would accept four Arabs and Turkmen for the four positions in dispute: deputy governor, Kirkuk mayor, and heads of the appointments and reconstruction councils. Barzani had one condition. The four persons chosen must accept the TAL; in particular, the implementation of Article 58 about Kirkuk.

2. (C) In his July 23 meeting with the Ambassador, President Talabani, who is also the leader of the Kurdish PUK party, confirmed that the Kurds would be flexible on these appointments as long as those chosen by the Turkmen and Arabs respected the TAL. Talabani mentioned only in passing that at least three of the four positions could go to Arabs and Turkmen. Talabani emphasized again that the province's long-term future should not be decided until several years. He hinted that not all Kurds (i.e., the KDP) agree with him.

3. (C) It is important that the Arabs and Turkmen end their boycott of the Provincial Council, and that the province's government be stabilized. Embassy and REO Kirkuk will continue to prod the Arab and Turkmen political leaders in Kirkuk to find reputable candidates for the positions in dispute. We will drive home the point to the KDP and PUK that the deal is for all four positions. It will be easier to negotiate individual Arabs and Turkmen for these positions now that Barzani has accepted in principle to cede the positions to them. There may still be a problem with local Kurds taking a tougher line than Barzani, as indicated in reftel. We will make it clear to the Kurds that the immediate resolution of the Kirkuk government problem is an issue distinct from that of the province's long-term future.

4. (C) FOR REO KIRKUK: Post is requested to engage with key KDP, PUK, Turkmen and Arab Provincial Council figures to press on closing the "deal" ostensibly accepted by Barzani and Talabani.

5. (U) REO HILLAH, REO KIRKUK, REO MOSUL, REO BASRAH minimize considered.  
Khalilzad